

The background is a vibrant watercolor wash. It features a mix of warm colors: deep reds, bright oranges, and sunny yellows. The colors are layered and blended, creating a soft, ethereal texture. The overall effect is one of warmth and spiritual light.

Holy Week Prayer
2009

Opening Hymn: *Before the Fruit is Ripened by the Sun*

Be-fore the fruit is rip-ened by the sun,
Be-fore the pet-als or the leaves un-coil,
Be-fore the first fine and sil-ken root is spun,
A seed is dropped and bur-ied in the soil.

Be-fore the Eas-ter songs and prais-es ring,
Be-fore the mas-sive rock is rolled a-side,
Be-fore the fear of death has lost its sting,
A just and lov-ing man is cru-ci-fied.

Be-fore we gain the grace that comes through loss,
Be-fore we live by more than bread and breath,
Be-fore we lift in joy an empty cross,
We face with Christ the seed's re-new-ing death.

Call to Prayer:

(Leader)

Beloved friends, let us prepare to celebrate the sacred mysteries of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday. By our prayer and meditation, may we open ourselves up to the cycle of loving sacrifice, expectant darkness, and glorious new life to which Holy Week invites us annually. In the depths of these days, there is wisdom to be found in the rhythms that echo throughout creation. Rooted in the rich traditions of our faith, may we blossom forth in new growth that bears good fruit in the coming year.

(All)

Amen.

Invocation:

(All)

O God, bless our Lenten journey.
Let us walk the blessing path of Jesus.
Blessed be the path of giving.
Blessed be the path of discipling.
Blessed be the garden of grieving.
Blessed be the mountain of the cross.
May we be more loving, more generous,
More forgiving, more grateful,
As we trod the desert path
Leading to Easter's water—
A fountain springing up
Toward Eternal life!

Holy Thursday

...the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." I Corinthians 11

Hymn: *Seed Scattered and Sown*

Refrain:

Seed scattered and sewn,
Wheat, gathered and grown
Bread, broken and shared as one,
The living bread of God.
Vine, fruit of the land,
Wine, work of our hands,
One cup that is shared by all;
The living cup, the living bread of God.

- ♦ Is not the bread we break a sharing in our Lord?
Is not the cup we bless the blood of Christ out-poured?

Refrain

- ♦ The seed which falls on rock will wither and will die.
The seed within good ground will flower and have life.

Refrain

- ♦ As wheat upon the hills was gathered and grown,
So may the church of God be gathered into one.

Refrain

Reading:

The Church teaches us to be human: you need the soil, the trees, the water; you need the rhythm of nature; you need real and deep contact with the real, fundamental things. In a healthy world we would not have to learn these things. But ours is a very unhealthy world, and we have to start again from the very beginning and be taught how to be human...Through the bread and wine [of the Eucharist] we become rooted again in nature; through the bread and wine we begin to live a divine life because we begin to be possessed by God. There is a third thing: The breaking of bread is the symbol of hospitality, of all that we mean by hearth and home; and so through the bread and wine we are restored also to our roots in the human family, and our individualism is taken away from us and the loneliness and frustration that come from it. And again there is something more...The Eucharist gives us peace...because it gives us roots, in this world and the next, in the human family and the divine.

Invocation:

(Leader) O gentle Jesus, Co-author of Creation,

(Left) may we make time in our daily lives to recognize the rich beauty that surrounds us and strive to protect the bounteous resources placed in our hands.

(Leader) O giving Jesus, Bread of Life,

(Right) teach us to give unstintingly, not only of our means but of our very selves, that we may feed those parts of one another that cannot live "by bread alone."

(Leader) O gracious Jesus, Divine Host,

(All) let us follow your example, seeking out the out-cast and lonely and draw them into a community of love and generosity, embracing them as valued members of the family of God.

Good Friday

Standing by cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala... John 18

Hymn: *Tree of Life*

- ♦ Tree of Life and awe-som mys-t'ry,
In your death we are re-born,
Though you die in all of hist'ry,
Still you rise with ev-'ry morn,
Still you rise with ev-'ry morn.
- ♦ Seed that dies to rise in glory,
May we see our-selves in you,
If we learn to live your sto-ry
We may die to rise a-new,
We may die to rise a-new.
- ♦ We remember truth once spo-ken,
Love passed on through act and word,
Ev-'ry person lost and broken
Wears the bod-y of our Lord,
Wears the bod-y of our Lord.

Reading:

...Good Friday continues the rich interplay between the presence of women and the passion of God. To begin with, there is the biblical memory of women's peculiar presence throughout the passion, crucifixion, and burial of Jesus. The women are there through it all, pure and simple. This real presence of women is not nothing. First...the presence of women disciples meant that Jesus did not die deserted. Second, being present to suffering is a form of suffering-with, of comPassion. ... Third, presence means witness; and this witness becomes a crucial part of the telling of the passion story to all future generations. The eye-witnesses are the ones who authenticate, after all. They were there and saw with their own eyes.

The Offering:

(Leader) We believe that, if we are to rise with Christ, we must first die with Christ. In the hope of that death and resurrection, let us take up our crosses and offer them to God.

(The prayerful may now take up the crosses at their seats, write on them their intended resolutions, and slowly process to offertory fire to consign them to God's hands.)

Invocation:

(Leader) O Man of Sorrows,

(Left) we ask the grace to stay with you in your suffering as we relive your Good Friday.

(Leader) O Christ of the Tree,

(Right) you permitted yourself to be bound to the awful wood of the cross that we might be freed from bondage. Faced with the temptations of this world, may we remember your sacrifice and reject the bondage of sin.

(Leader) O Mighty King of Life, crowned with thorns,

(All) you permitted yourself to be put to death that we might live. May you find joy in our living as we praise you forever.

Holy Saturday

Having bought a linen cloth, [Joseph of Arimathea] took him down, wrapped him in the linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. Mark 4

Hymn: *Holy Darkness*

Refrain:

Ho-ly Dark-ness, bless-ed night,
Heav-en's an-swer hidden from our sight.
As we a-wait you, O God of si-lence,
We em-brace your hol-y night.

♦ I have tried you in the fires of af-flic-tion;
I have taught your soul to grieve.
In the bar-ren soil of your lone-li-ness,
There I will plant my seed.

Refrain

♦ I have taught you the price of com-pas-sion,
You have stood be-fore the grave.
Though my love can seem like a raging storm,
This is the love that saves.

Refrain

♦ As the watch-man waits for the morn-ing,
And the bride a-waits her groom,
So we wait to hear your foot-steps
As we rest beneath your moon.

Refrain

Meditation in Silence...

Offertory Prayer:

(Leader) Like Advent, Holy Saturday is a time of prayerful anticipation. We have heard God's promises and now we must rely on faith and hope as we await the time of fulfillment. In this spirit let us place our hopes and needs before the God in whom we trust.

Prayers of the Faithful

All Respond: God of silence, hear our prayer.

Invocation:

(Leader) Jesus, Seed of Eternal Life,

(Left) for three days you lay hidden in darkness from our sight. When darkness falls in our own lives, and all hope feels dead in our chests, may we trust that joy will come again in due season.

(Leader) Jesus, Lord of the Springtide,

(Right) your coming warms the soul and shakes the boughs our complacency. Make us blossom forth with good works and quiver with the delight of rebirth.

(Leader) Jesus, First Fruit of the Final Harvest,

(All) Your resurrection gives us hope. When the time of our growing and striving is at an end, may God find pleasure in the fruits of our labor as well.

Easter Sunday

So the disciples went home again; but Mary [Magdalene] stood at the tomb outside, weeping. As she wept, she peered into the tomb... John 20

Hymn: Now the Green Blade Rises

Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,
Wheat that in dark earth ma-ny days has lain.
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:

Refrain: Love is come again like wheat a-rising green.

In the grave they laid him, love by hatred slain,
Thin-king that he would ne-ver wake again,
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:

Refrain: Love is come again like wheat a-rising green...

Reading:

Mary's tears blind her.... The drama of misunderstanding rises as the Easter symbols intensify. When she comes face-to-face with the Lord himself, she likewise fails to recognize his living presence. Instead, she mistakes him for a gardener....The garden symbolism is lost to her...all the symbols of vibrant, resurrection life confirm her only in the conviction of death and desecration. Yet, despite misunderstanding, Mary at no point abandons her search to leave for home. Behind her tears are love and determination as well as misunderstanding. It is this persistence in exploring the symbols—even though she does not at first recognize them as such—which is finally rewarded when Magdalene, hearing her name, turns back and joyfully recognizes the Lord.

Hymn Resumes...

Forth he came at Easter, like the rising grain,
He that for three days in the grave had lain;
Raised from the dead, my living Lord is seen:

Refrain: Love is come again like wheat a-rising green.

Closing Prayer:

(Leader)

Christ the true Sun rose from the dark last night,
The mystic harvest of the Lord's own field.
Now wandering tribes of bees joyously sport between the flowers
Seeking their nectars sweet.
The honeyed winds with birdsong are bedewed,
Nocturnal melody of nightingales abounds.
In the church, the people chorus out their Zion song.
Their hundred-folded alleluia sounds...
May heavenly Easter joy
Gather you to the threshold of the light.

(All)
Amen.

Credits

Holy Week Prayer 2009:

Compiled and assembled by Sacha Ludwig

Cover Art:

Red Canna, 1923 by Georgia O’Keefe

Music:

Before the Fruit is Ripened by the Sun

Text by T. Troeger

Tune: *Nyack* by W. Swenson

Seed, Scattered and Sown

Text & Tune by Ekklesia Music, Inc.

Tree of Life

Text by Marty Haugen

Tune: *Thomas 8 7 8 77* by Marty Haugen

Holy Darkness

Text by St. John of the Cross

Tune by Daniel L. Schutte

Now the Green Blade Rises

Text by John M. C. Crum

Tune: *Noel Nouvelet*, a medieval French carol arranged by Martin F. Shaw

Sources:

Invocation 1: “Prayer for Lent” in William John Fitzgerald, *A Contemporary Celtic Prayer Book: 127-128*.

Reading1: Gerald Vann—from *Triduum I* :45.

Reading2: Teresa Berger, *Fragments of Real Presence, Liturgical Traditions in the Hands of Women*:189.

Reading3: Dorothy Lee, *Flesh and Glory, Symbolism, Gender and Theology in the Gospel of John*: 223.

Closing Prayer: by Siadhal mac Feredach (Ninth Century Irish Poet), in *The Celtic Book of Days*: 61.

Other prayers and invocations by Sacha Ludwig